

# THE MISSION

A photograph of three people standing on a grassy lawn in front of the Tennessee State Capitol building. On the left is a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blazer over a patterned top and a dark skirt. In the center is a young woman with dark hair, wearing a dark uniform with a badge. On the right is a man with a beard, wearing a dark polo shirt with a badge and khaki pants. The Capitol building is a large, classical-style building with a prominent dome and columns, set against a clear blue sky.

Tennessee Department of Correction

Winter 2015

**Commissioner Schofield:**  
2015 A Year Above P.A.R.

**Jonah's Journey:**  
Saving One Child At a Time

**Take One:**  
How You Can Help Reduce  
Recidivism

**Operation Blackout:**  
A United Team Keeping Our  
Community Safe



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## TDOC Mission Statement:

To operate safe and secure prisons and provide effective community supervision in order to enhance public safety.

## TDOC Vision:

To be recognized as the best correctional agency in the nation.

## Customer Focused Government

It is the TDOC's goal to enhance public safety and provide exceptional customer service.

## Executive Staff

Commissioner  
Derrick D. Schofield

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# 2015 — A Year Above P.A.R.

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Mission Magazine*! I am excited that this magazine is finally hot off the presses and into your hands. The Mission is just another way that we can share the good work of the Tennessee Department of Correction. This magazine is an opportunity for you—the reader—to be introduced to the best correctional agency in the nation!

What makes TDOC the best correctional agency in the nation? Over the past four years, we have restructured old processes and established new procedures which have Corrections operating at a higher level. Since FY11, our team has reduced the number of violent incidents by 29%. Rehabilitative programming, which lowers an offenders engagement in crime and decreases victimization of law-abiding citizens, has increased by 7%. We have revamped our Standards of Supervision to ensure we are aligning our methods with nationally recognized best practices.

But all of the stats and processes only tell part of the TDOC story. The numbers only show the result of the hard work of our team. Our people make this department the best correctional agency in the nation. Our team consistently performs **Above P.A.R.** According to the dictionary, “above par” means to deliver or produce a product better than expected. While that is definitely what the TDOC team delivers, I want to take that phrase and break it down even further. I believe the TDOC family not only exceeds expectations but this team is **Professional**, **Accountable**, and **Responsible**.

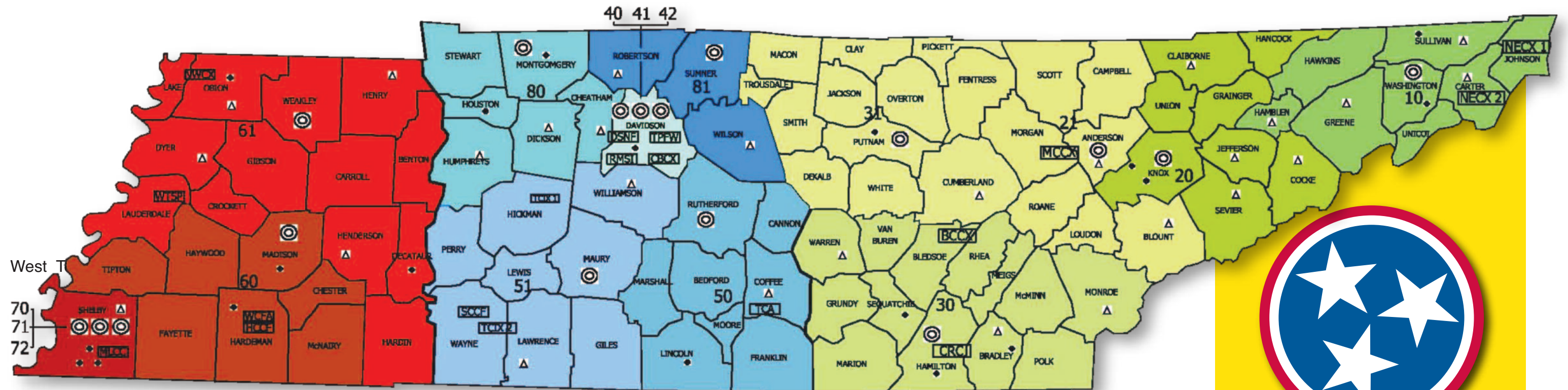
Every day more than 6,000 dedicated **professionals** work to keep you safe. I believe our staff is the hardest working team in state government. We are committed to making sure this team has the tools, training and support to be successful. We encourage each other to pursue training and higher education to ready themselves for the future. In fact, more than 70 team members have earned collegiate degrees in the past four years.

Not only are we professionals but we are **accountable** to each other and to the community. We hold ourselves to a high standard and encourage each other. We applaud each other and correct because we know that we are stronger together. We know that we are one team delivering one message fulfilling one mission.

From the Correctional Officers to the Probation Parole Officers, the men and women that put on the TDOC uniform do so with a sense of dedication and service. The staff that come to work at our properties across the state do so with a sense of commitment and **responsibility** to the State of Tennessee. We take our responsibility to enhance public safety seriously and work hard to make our communities safer.



# TDOC FOOTPRINT



## West Tennessee

## Prisons:

Mark Luttrell Correctional Center  
West Tennessee State Penitentiary  
Northwest Correctional Complex  
Hardeman County Correctional Facility (CCA)  
Whiteville Correctional Facility (CCA)

### Probation & Parole District Offices:

District 60—Jackson  
District 61—Dresden  
District 70—Memphis  
District 71—Memphis  
District 72—Memphis

## Middle Tennessee

## Prisons:

Riverbend Maximum Security Institution  
Lois DeBerry Special Needs Facility  
Charles Bass Correctional Complex  
Tennessee Prison for Women  
Turney Center Industrial Complex  
South Central Correctional Facility (CCA)

### Probation & Parole District Offices:

District 40—Nashville  
District 41—Nashville  
District 42—Nashville  
District 50—Murfreesboro  
District 51—Columbia  
District 80—Clarksville  
District 81—Gallatin

## East Tennessee

## Prisons:

Morgan County Correctional Complex  
Bledsoe County Correctional Complex  
Northeast Correctional Complex

### Probation & Parole District Offices:

District 10—Johnson City  
District 20—Knoxville  
District 21—Clinton  
District 30—Chattanooga  
District 31—Cookeville



- ☆ **TDOD Prisons**
- ◎ **Probation & Parole District Offices**
- △ **Field Offices**
- **Community Correction Offices**



# Take One

Across Tennessee, Sunday mornings are filled with people heading to a myriad of religious services. In TDOC facilities, it's no different. Institution chaplains work with a variety of faith-based volunteers to bring religious services to more than 20,000 inmates. Quite often, offenders experience a spiritual awakening through the work of these dedicated volunteers. This awakening can be a catalyst for change in the life of the offender but that change can sometimes waver when faced with leaving prison and dealing with the challenges of the free world. Take One helps bridge the gap between faith and the free world.

Commissioner Derrick Schofield and Representative Johnny Shaw (D-Bolivar) brainstormed on a way to ease the transition home and came up with the idea for what has

become Take One. This program creates a network of faith-based and non-profit organizations that provide supportive services and mentors for offenders transitioning back into society. Nearly 90% of all inmates will eventually be released from prison. Take One asks churches and other faith-based nonprofits to help ensure their success by mentoring one offender and helping them make that transition during their first year out of prison. According to Commissioner Derrick Schofield, "Take One is an opportunity for citizens to take an active

role in enhancing public safety in Tennessee by helping offenders find their way to new, productive and crime-free lives."

Last year, TDOC hosted a series of informational prayer breakfasts to introduce the program to clergy across the

state. "We have more than 5,000 volunteers across the state that work with our offenders behind the wall. The prayer breakfasts introduced them to a new way of volunteering that goes beyond the prison and into the community," says Deborah Thompson, Director of Volunteer and Religious Services. The first breakfast was held at Christ UMC in Franklin, Tennessee. Events were also held in Jackson, Memphis, Knoxville and Chattanooga and Johnson City.

Since that initial rollout, more than 100 nonprofits have signed up to be mentors. At press time, more than 70 offenders have been matched with an agency. Representative Shaw, Chair of Take One, has this to say about the program: "I am proud of the difference Take One has made across the state thus far. Take One has been

successful because we have put into action the message that we are teaching, which is; I am my brother's keeper - that is what Take One is about."

When a nonprofit signs up to be a mentor, they are asked for their geographical preferences and have to undergo a background check to make sure they meet our volunteer requirements. After the check is completed, the mentors receive training about the program and working with our prison population. After these steps are completed, they are then matched with an inmate mentor.

To learn more about Take One, please contact Deborah Thompson, Director of Religious and Volunteer Services, at 615-253-8261 or email her at [Deborah.D.Thompson@tn.gov](mailto:Deborah.D.Thompson@tn.gov).

**Did you know that TDOC has more than 5,000 volunteers across the state?**

**More than 100 mentors have signed up for Take One.**



*The Tennessee Prison for Women Choir performs at a Take One prayer Breakfast.*



*Representative Johnny Shaw (D-Bolivar) prays before a Take One meeting.*



*Middle Tennessee's Take One Prayer Breakfast.*



*A Sunday morning service at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution.*



# WEST TENNESSEE RESOURCE FAIR

*Finding Success for Offenders*



These days, finding a job can be tough, but for exoffenders, that task is even more difficult. That's why the Tennessee Department of Correction partnered with the Tennessee Re-Entry Collaborative, the City of Memphis and Shelby County to hold a resource fair for ex-offenders at the Shelby County Fairgrounds in December.

"Before they can even get to employment, they have barriers they have to deal with," says Memphis Probation Parole Officer and Workforce Development Specialist, April Buckner.

Some of those obstacles include the need for job training, housing, health care, child support and education. More than 50 organizations specializing in those areas were on hand at the Resource Fair to provide help and information to ex-offenders. Over 1,000 people turned out for assistance, and the results are already speaking for themselves. Dozens have enrolled in vocational training programs, and others have succeeded in finding treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems, as well as housing and legal assistance.

Helping ex-offenders get the support they need to succeed through evidence-based programs following their release from prison is essential to cutting the recidivism rate and ensuring and enhancing the safety of the public.

"It's important to provide tools and resources for them to be able to get back out into the community and reenter and become productive citizens," says Buckner.

This was the second year for the resource fair in Shelby County. TDOC plans to continue its support for the event and hold other resource fairs throughout the state in 2015.

We all know how hard it is to pursue higher education after we've entered the professional world. Between work, family and social obligations, it can be tough. Add in the enrollment process, scheduling classes and the rigors of the financial aid process, and going back to school can seem like an impossible challenge.

Staff at the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex (BCCX) accepted that challenge and made the idea of earning a degree a reality. Several months ago, then Warden Eric Qualls had a vision of forming a partnership with a college and creating a program that would make taking classes easier for BCCX staff. He tasked Training Coordinator Jennifer Cato with spearheading this project, and she hit the ground running. Mrs. Cato made contact with Ann Carroll, the Dean of Admissions at Chattanooga State Community College (CSCC), and the two of them worked to forge a partnership between BCCX and CSCC.

They designed an accelerated program that allows staff to pursue an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice. Once a week, an instructor from the CSCC Bledsoe/Sequatchie campus visits the BCCX facility and teaches a course for staff. Not only does the class come to you, it is also free through the Tennessee State Employees 'Tennessee Higher Education Fee Waiver' Program.

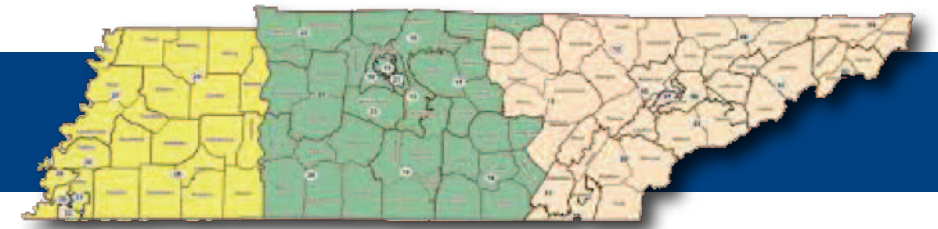
The first class was seven weeks and had 22 staff sign up and complete. The current class, 'Intro to Law Enforcement', began in late January and is slated to be a 16 week course. It will be taught as a hybrid online/classroom course. This class structure enables staff who work second shift and cannot attend the classroom sessions to still participate in the course.

"This program is a great opportunity for BCCX staff who otherwise would not be able to work in the time for traditional classes and coursework," said Cato. "The benefits of this program are invaluable." To learn more about the program and classes, contact Jennifer Cato at 423-881-6137.

# An Accelerated Path to Higher Education







## Shelby County TDOC Staff Gives Back

TDOC celebrated a huge success in Shelby County, where staffers took on Delano Elementary as part of the Adopt-A-School program. Our dedicated team has donated enough school supplies for the entire year, as well as Thanksgiving baskets for families in need. They also help out with science fairs and spelling bees. PSU Michelle Hill



is also featured as the school's community partner, as a part of the school district's Education Involves Everyone campaign.

## WTSP Celebration of Life

The brutal killing of a West Tennessee mother of two struck a chord with offenders at West Tennessee

State Penitentiary, who decided to step in to help her two young daughters.



Tasha Thomas was gunned down in front of the daycare where she worked by her estranged husband on September 2nd, 2014. After killing his wife, Charles Thomas later turned the gun on himself. Tasha Thomas left behind two daughters, Calise and Cyla.

After hearing of the tragedy, offenders at WTSP decided to help. They worked with the prison wardens, chaplains and outside churches to hold a benefit concert. The Celebration of Life Concert was held on December 20th, and featured



songs performed by the inmate choir, as well as several guest speakers. Offenders collected more than \$2,000 in donations for Tasha's two daughters, who are now being cared for by their grandmother. The girls also received personal gifts from the offenders, including handcrafted jewelry, cards and a painted portrait of them with their mother.

## Changing Lives: Successes for TDOC's Education Department

The Tennessee Department of Correction's education staffers are some of the best in the country. Recently, their dedication and expertise has gained both regional and national recognition. During a recent statewide Principals

Meeting hosted by the Rehabilitative Services Office of Education, TDOC presenters discussed vocational certification, library compliance, educator licensure and legal information.

In December, TDOC Director of Education Rhonda Whitt served as a presenter and panel participant at the 2014 HiSET conference in Las Vegas, Nevada where she discussed the implementation of computer-based testing in TDOC facilities and its successes. TDOC began administering the HiSET exam in place of the GED exam in 2014 to offenders hoping to earn a high school equivalency diploma. So far, 460 TDOC offenders have passed the exam.

Another big accomplishment came when the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) granted candidate status to TDOC. That means the agency has the ability to train offenders and submit records to the NCCER registry. In addition, TDOC offenders who successfully complete a vocational training program through an NCCER-sponsored program will be placed on the registry, which is frequently used by employers when making hiring decisions.

## Memphis Community Impact Program

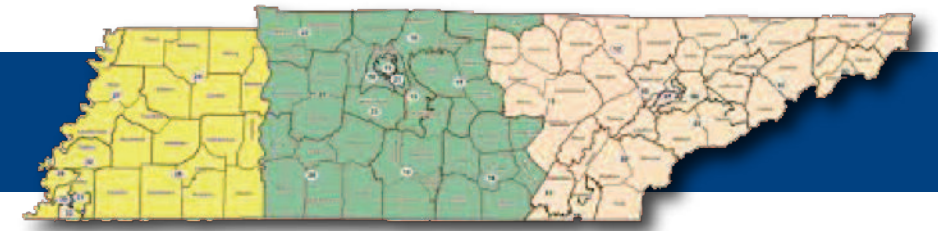
Intensive supervision combined with a focus on getting ex-offenders the resources they need has been key to the success of the Memphis Community Impact Program, or MCIP. Now, the Department of Correction plans to launch other Community Impact Programs in Tennessee.

TDOC launched MCIP in 2013 in the Frazier area of Memphis, as a collaborative effort between Probation Parole Officers and local law enforcement. A team of PPOs dedicated to the MCIP program supervise those offenders deemed to be at the highest risk for violation because they need immediate intervention to address critical needs. Those needs include housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, family counseling, transportation and education. Community partners and non-profit organizations working with the MCIP team help to place offenders in programs and get them the assistance they need in order to be successful, and reduce their risk of re-offending.

After examining the success of the initial MCIP program, TDOC expanded it to serve all of Shelby County, where it has helped to reduce recidivism, increase the number of ex-offenders who successfully re-enter society and increase and ensure the safety of the public. The Department plans to launch three more Community Impact Programs in Murfreesboro, Chattanooga and Knoxville in 2015.



# NEWS FROM MIDDLE TENNESSEE



Commissioner Derrick Schofield places a remembrance Ornament on the wreath.

## Tennessee Season To Remember

In December, Governor Bill Haslam hosted the 12th Annual “Tennessee Season To Remember” Ceremony to honor victims of homicide. More than 200 people attended the event which was planned by a committee that included Shenette Cheatham and Betsy Fletcher, both from the TDOC Victims’ Services Department.

During the event, Commissioner Derrick Schofield joined Governor Haslam and many other public officials in honoring the victims by placing ornaments on memorial wreaths.

District Attorney General Mike Dunavant, who serves the 25th Judicial District, gave the address. Vocalist Sylvia Hutton provided the musical entertainment and honored the families in song.

After the ceremony, the wreaths were moved to the Capitol where they remained on display throughout the holiday season.

## Program Teaches TN Offenders to Train Service Dogs

An innovative program at the Turney Center Industrial Complex has provided half a dozen Tennessee families with the highly-trained service dogs they need.

Retrieving Independence matches specially screened offenders with puppies to train as service animals.

On October 10th, a graduation ceremony was held for eight of those dogs, who will now go home with their new owners.

During the intensive training process, offenders spend nearly 24 hours a day with the dogs for up to 18-months, teaching them everything from seizure detection and wheelchair assistance, to opening and closing doors and loading laundry.

A recipient for each dog is matched early on and the animal’s training program is tailored to meet that person’s specific needs. Those involved with the program, like Turney Center employee Shawna Zimmerman, say it’s a joy to see their development.



“To watch how these dogs progress and see the positive outcome is truly amazing,” says Zimmerman. “There were obstacles but everyone had to learn to work together.”

It isn’t just the recipients of the dogs who are benefitting. Disciplinary incidents inside the Turney Center have dropped since the program was introduced in 2012, as offenders strive to qualify to become trainers.

“It gives you a sense of self-worth. You give back to the community,” says one offender. “I also don’t feel like a failure as much as I did before. I feel like a person again. It has also

taught me to put my differences aside for the greater cause.”

Since it began at the Turney Center, the Retrieving Independence program has now trained and matched nearly a dozen service dogs with people in need.

## TN Deputy Administrator Honored by ICAOS



Tennessee Department of Correction Deputy Compact Administrator Debbie Duke has been awarded this year’s prestigious Executive Director’s Award by the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision.

Duke was chosen from a nationwide field of nominees and presented with the award during the ICAOS National Conference this past fall in Oklahoma City.

“The pool of entries is almost limitless, as any person from any member state or organization is eligible so I was very humbled to receive this,” Duke says of the honor. “It is my privilege to assist with reuniting families or removing offenders from volatile situations that may lead to recidivism.”

The ICAOS Executive Director’s Award is presented each year to one person to recognize his or her contributions, professionalism, leadership and dedication.

Assistant Commissioner Bobby Straughter nominated Duke not only for her extensive knowledge of the Compact

Agreement, but also her willingness to regularly go above and beyond the call of duty and her positive attitude.

“Debbie is a tremendous asset to me and to the 1,000 other members of community supervision in Tennessee,” Straughter says. “I value Debbie, not only as my colleague, but as my friend. Her drive and passion exemplify the true definition of our agency’s mission.”

## District 50 Gives Back to the Community

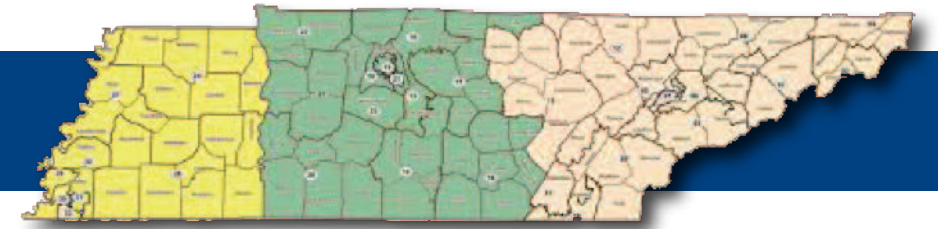
TDOC team members pride themselves on giving back to the community. Throughout the month of December, District 50 staff members dedicated their time to helping the Mid-Cumberland Community Action Agency with its Holiday Commodity Distribution in Rutherford County. That program provides non-perishable food items to families in need. Their efforts started with packing the boxes. Nearly six tons of food was packed for distribution at Allen Chapel



Church in a single day. Once the boxes were packed, distribution began. District 50 team members worked with local fire departments and MCCA staffs to unload and hand out commodity boxes to residents at Westbrook Towers in Murfreesboro and Meadowlawn Manor in Smyrna, and helped to man a distribution site at Allen Chapel Church. Thanks to their efforts, hundreds of residents in Middle Tennessee were able to have holiday meals.



# NEWS FROM EAST TENNESSEE



## Marketplace Opens with TDOC's Help

An exciting new addition is now welcoming residents and visitors to Tennessee's "oldest town," thanks to the contributions of staff and offenders at Northeast Correctional Complex.

This fall, Jonesborough city officials cut the ribbon on the Boone Street Market, a grassroots effort years in the making. Local residents spent nearly two years developing a plan and raising money, but still needed help to make their vision a reality, so they turned to the Tennessee Department of Correction.

Over the course of three and half months this past summer, Correctional Officers and their work crews completely renovated an old run-down and abandoned gas station, transforming it into a booming, year-round marketplace where local farmers and merchants can sell their products. It's estimated that the TDOC work crews helped to save the city \$125,000 in labor costs on the project. That savings made it possible for work on the market to move forward.

"Now it's a beautiful market right at the entryway to our town, a place we can be proud of," says Jonesborough Mayor Kelly Wolfe. "We could not have done it had it not been for the Tennessee Department of Correction and Northeast Correctional Complex."

The Boone Street Market is the fourth major project that officers and work crews from Northeast Correctional Complex have completed in recent years for the town of Jonesborough.

Statewide, the Department of Correction has provided over 742,000 hours of inmate labor for local governments and community-based organizations, worth an estimated \$5,383,000. These projects include roadside cleanup, construction and custodial work.

## Laurel Creek Trail Opening

A grand opening was held for a three-mile stretch of the Laurel Creek Trail near Mountain City, a project made possible by the hard work of officers and offenders from Northeast Correctional Complex. For seven years, NECX Officer Joe Reese and his work line cleared the forest and helped to build the trail for the citizens of Johnson County. Tennessee Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey was among those who attended the ceremony.



## Tennessee Recovery Courts to Expand

A \$1 million federal grant will be used to give Tennesseans struggling with addiction the opportunity to choose treatment over prison.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment, with support from the Tennessee Department of Correction, has been awarded the grant to expand the Morgan County Statewide Recovery Court and 28 participating county courts across the state. The grant money will support 60 individuals a year, allowing for a total of 180 men to receive services during the 3-year grant cycle. Felony recovery courts in Tennessee that are seeking more intensive services for their male, non-violent offenders will be able to refer them to the program. Once those offenders complete the Morgan County Residential Recovery Court program, they will transition back to their home county court, where grant funds will continue to provide for a range of support services to help them continue their recovery.

Tennessee's recovery courts provide an alternative to prison for non-violent felony offenders who struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues.

## Northeast Correctional Complex Bike Donation

For more than a decade, Northeast Correctional Complex has teamed up with Beta Theta, a philanthropic organization, to provide bicycles to children in need. Beta Theta collects used bikes, then turns them over to NECX, where offenders restore them, making them like new again and ready for a deserving new owner! In December alone, 43 bicycles were repaired and refurbished by NECX offenders. Great job!



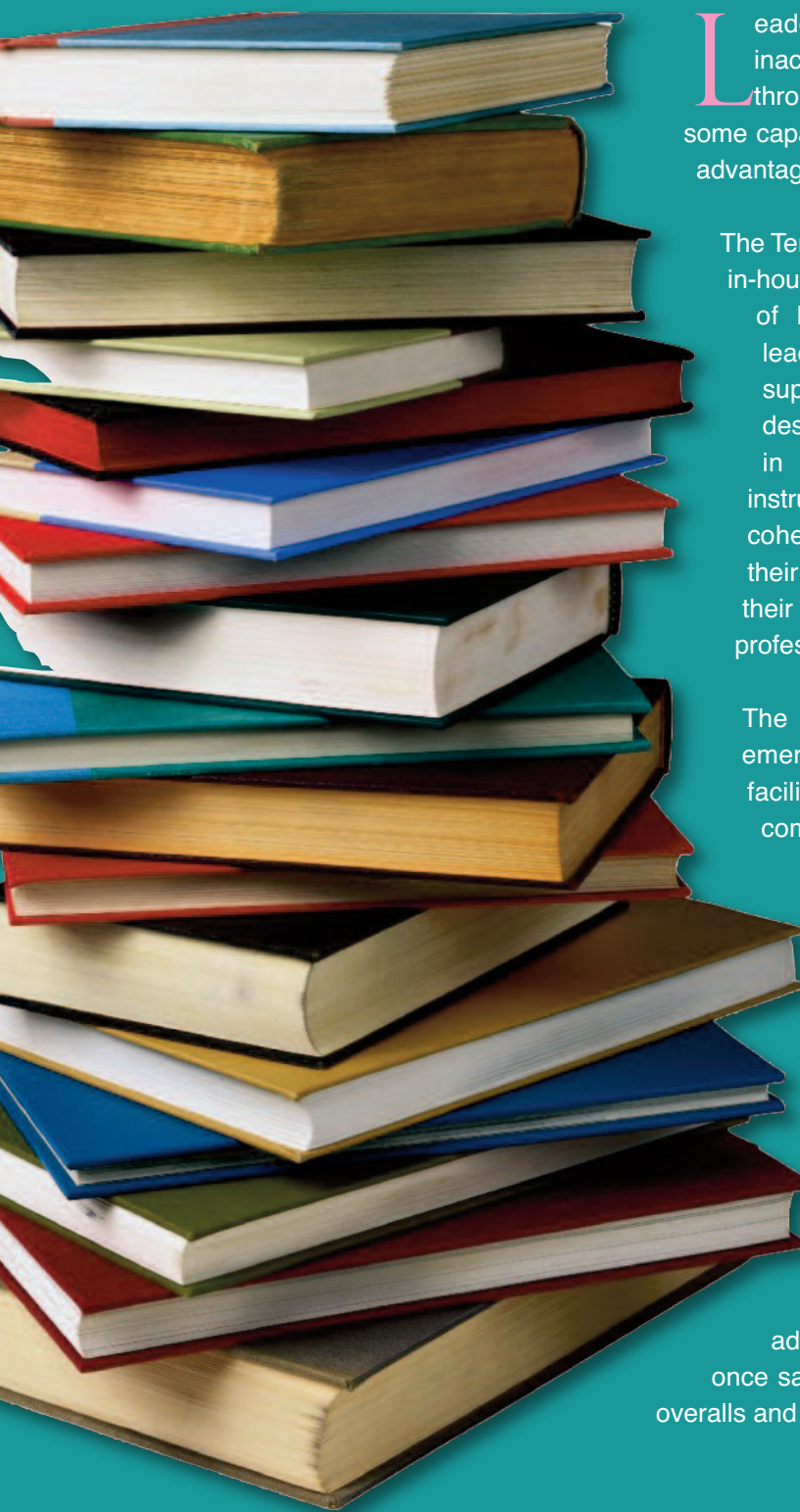
## Morgan County Correctional Complex Toy Donation

More than 230 children had a gift to unwrap on Christmas morning, thanks to the efforts and generosity of the staff at Morgan County Correctional Complex. After a full year of collecting toys and raising money, they donated four truckloads of gifts to the area's Angel Tree program. MCCX's Angel Tree donation is an annual tradition that has grown over the years.





# TALENT MANAGEMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Leaders set the tone of the agency through their actions and inactions and strong leaders are committed to developing leaders throughout the organization. While we are all currently leaders in some capacity, only those who seek to develop these talents and take advantage of opportunities will rise to top leadership positions.

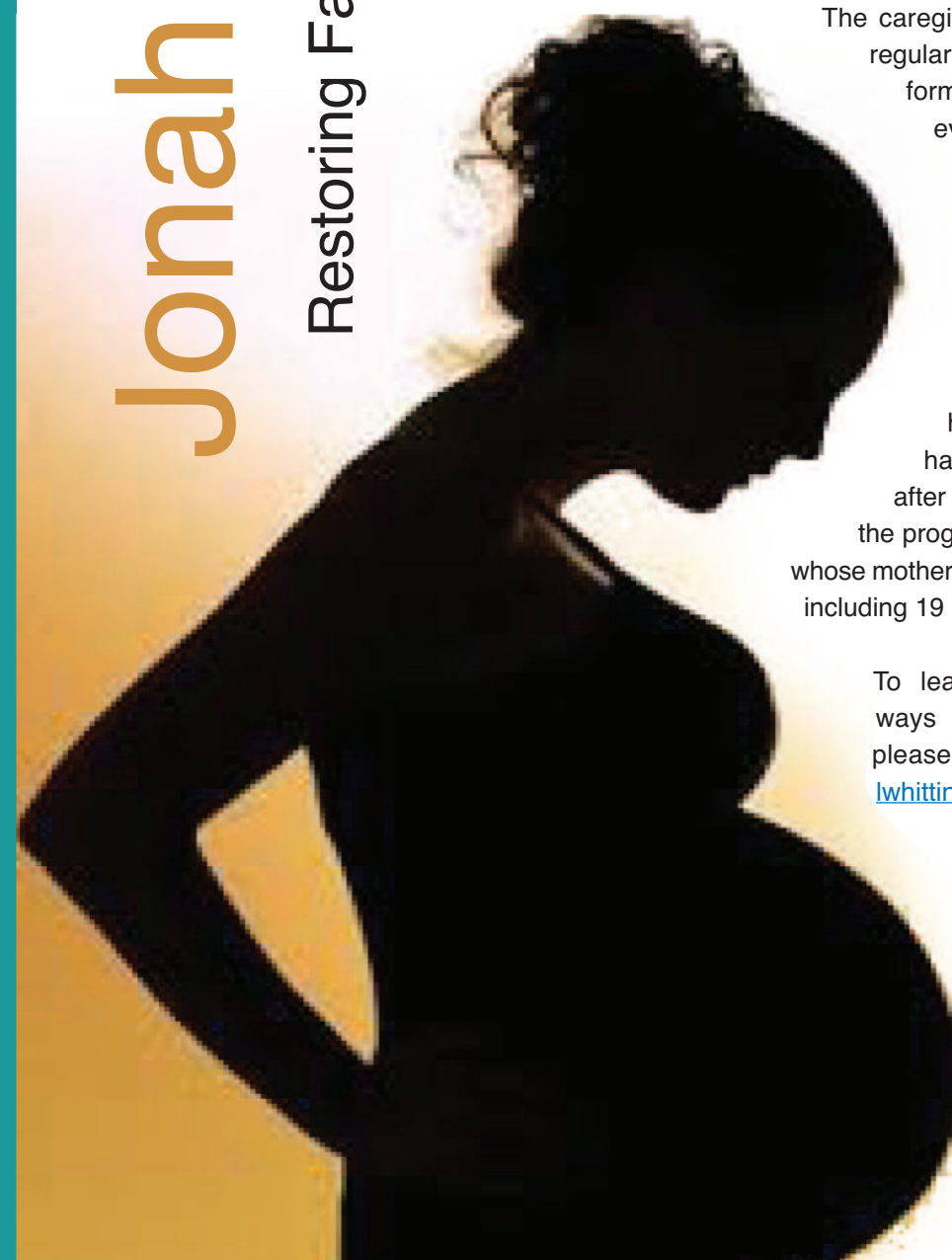
The Tennessee Department of Correction is fortunate to have several in-house development programs and others at the State Department of Human Resources (DOHR) through which to build our leadership bench. For institutional and Community Supervision supervisors, the Sergeant's Academy is an 80-hour TCA program designed to be the first phase in the new standard of excellence in the leadership of our department. The participants are instructed in cutting-edge principles of leadership, motivation, team cohesion, and resource management. Participants demonstrate their commitment to excellence, dedication to the department and their coworkers, and their willingness to be a positive role model of professionalism.

The newly-established Commissioner's Academy is open to all emerging and established leaders within TDOC. This program, facilitated by DOHR, focuses on eight needed leadership competencies as identified by senior staff. This year-long, foundational leadership program consists of orientation, every other month gatherings, and other developmental activities and assignments. This is the first year for the program but it will eventually become the feeder for DORH leadership programs such as LEAD Tennessee, Tennessee Executive Government Institution (TGEI), and Tennessee Management Government Institute (TGMI).

As we build the leaders of tomorrow, we are also building the development programs to get them there. Senior leadership is truly supportive of this evolutionary journey on which the entire department is traveling. All are encouraged to apply for appropriate programs and to take advantage of every opportunity presented. As Thomas Edison once said, "Opportunity is missed by most because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." Do the work.

## Jonah's Journey

### Restoring Families One Child at a Time



Most women who find themselves in prison and pregnant face a heartbreaking choice: either find a family member who can care for the baby, or be forced to turn the child over to foster care. For many children of offenders, this choice can have lasting effects. One study reports that nearly 75% of offenders in prison spent some time in the foster care system as a child. But one Tennessee ministry program is stepping in to break the cycle.

Jonah's Journey works with offenders inside the Tennessee Prison for Women to provide a different option: A chance to get their children back once they're released. The faith-based organization matches pregnant offenders with a caregiver family that will care for the baby, giving that child a stable family environment in which he or she can thrive and live a normal life. Meanwhile, mothers take educational, vocational and parenting classes, as they prepare to reunite with their children once they finish their sentences.

"All of our women will eventually get out," says Jonah's Journey director LeAllison Whittinghill. "We have to love them in here, and on the outside. That's the only way to help change who they are."

The caregivers bring the children to the prison for regular visits with their mothers, allowing them to form a bond and remain a part of their lives, even while still in prison. These visits not only give the women something to look forward to, it also gives them an incentive to improve themselves, and prepare for life after prison.

Since its introduction into the Tennessee Prison for Women, Jonah's Journey has helped dozens of women, many of whom have successfully reunited with their children after their release from prison. This year alone, the program serviced 58 children across the state whose mothers were serving time in prisons or local jails, including 19 at the Tennessee Prison for Women.

To learn more about Jonah's Journey and ways you can help support this program, please contact LeAllison Whittinghill at [lwhittinghill@jonahsjourney.org](mailto:lwhittinghill@jonahsjourney.org).



# 2014 by the Numbers

14 State Prisons

21,246 Inmates

\$74 Per Day, Per Inmate  
Housing Cost

79,299 Offenders on Community  
Supervision

6,858 Total TDOC Employees

4,478 Security Staff

460 High School Equivalency  
Diplomas Earned by Offenders  
Through HiSET

369,445 Hours of Community  
Service Work Provided by  
Inmates Created a Savings of  
\$2,678,476

167,106 Hours of Community  
Service Work Provided by  
Community Supervision Created  
a Savings of \$1,211,521



## OPERATION: BLACKOUT

**A**s trick-or-treaters took to the streets of Tennessee on Halloween night, so did hundreds of Probation Parole Officers focused on keeping them safe.

More than 300 TDOC officers teamed up with local law enforcement agencies to canvas the state for Operation Blackout, a massive program aimed at ensuring registered sex offenders comply with certain guidelines on Halloween.

“I hope families feel comfortable knowing we’re out there, trying to keep the public safe,” said TDOC District 60 (Jackson) Director James Beard.

Sex offenders have to abide by a strict curfew, cannot open their doors for trick-or-treaters, decorate their homes or dress in costumes. Those regulations are designed to protect children, and The Tennessee Department of Correction launched Operation Blackout to enforce them as part of our ongoing mission to ensure the safety of the public.

“I would prefer to do this, as opposed to being at home,” said Memphis Probation Parole Officer Michelle Hill. “That’s our number one goal, just to make sure that the community is safe and making sure that the kids are safe.”

During 2014’s Operation Blackout, TDOC officer teams conducted 1,806 checks on sex offenders on Halloween night.

### By the Numbers

- 300 Officers
- 1,806 Checks on Halloween Night
- 1,941 Pre-Halloween Checks
- 61 Violations Issued on Halloween
- 7 Total Arrests





# Beauty for Ashes

When most people think of the Department of Correction the first image that comes to mind is of offenders and stern looking correctional officers. While that is an important part of the agency, there is another side—the rehabilitation side. An integral part of that rehabilitation process is equipping offenders with skills that will serve them upon release from prison and that is where you will find our TDOC teachers.

TDOC teachers are highly qualified educators that take their years of experience in a classroom and apply it to a uniquely adult setting. Often times they are more than teachers. They are mentors, counselors, and champions as well. And that describes Rebecca Thompson.



Rebecca Thompson is the cosmetology instructor at Tennessee Prison for Women. Despite her youthful appearance, Ms. Thompson has been a licensed cosmetologist for more than 30 years. She started her correctional career as a correctional officer and worked with juvenile offenders. After using her cosmetology background to create a successful vocational class for juveniles, she was recruited to TPFW to start a class there as well.

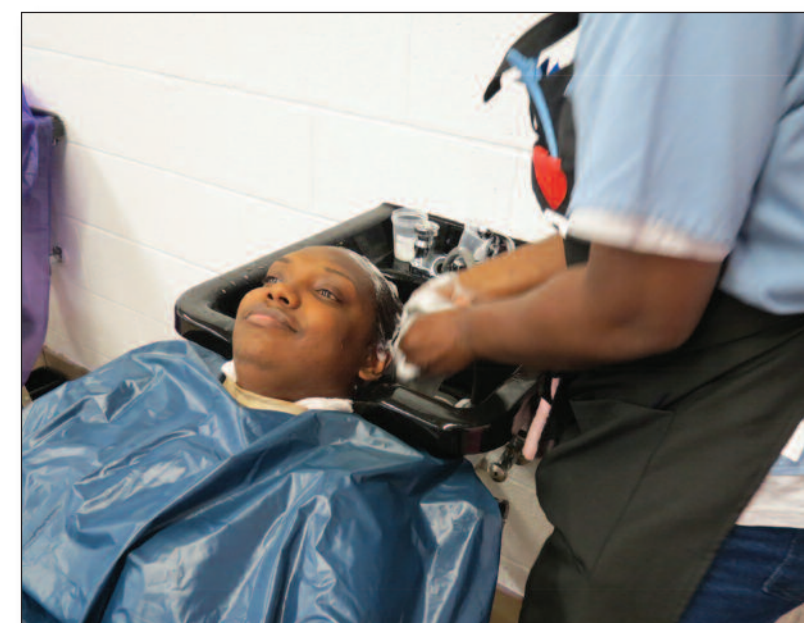
For the past four years, Ms. Thompson has been pouring encouragement into the hearts and minds of her students. She not only touches the lives of the apprentice cosmetologists, she encourages and inspires the women who come to the salon for services.

Offender Donna McCoy calls Ms. Thompson “an awesome instructor.”

Offender LaTanya Townsend, who is also a licensed cosmetologist has this to add, “She is patient. She teaches life skills, ethics, and about being a woman. She’s here to support us.”

Offender Teresa Wambles credits Ms. Thompson for helping offenders with expiring sentences find work outside the prison. She brings in salon owners to network with the students to help them succeed when they return home. Wambles shares that Thompson “is the highlight of our lives.”

When asked what made her consider a job in corrections she said she prayed and told God that she wanted to “be of service to You and Your people.” She later added that this job fulfills both of those requirements, “I am able to come to work and be productive. I get to see that in the women I touch every day.”



When asked what words of advice she would tell anyone considering a job in corrections, she advised that “you gotta love people. You must come in wanting to help people.” After listening to the words of her students, it appears that Rebecca Thompson does indeed love people and it shows!





## Correctional Officer Megan Gentry



There are very few posts and job duties that CCO Megan Gentry is unfamiliar with. CCO Gentry has been with NECX for a total of seven years; she started as a Correctional Officer and has worked just about every single post possible, including Central Control, multiple housing units, HSA (now SMU), and the yard. She moved from security to the CCO position in August 2011 and most recently worked under the Administrative Lieutenant. While in that position CCO Gentry played an integral part in organizing the implementation of the 28-Day/ 6-3 work schedule. She helped identify and solve several of the ‘kinks’ NECX experienced and was very proactive at ensuring staff at NECX new and understood the change. When she is not working on Master Rosters, Megan enjoys riding her Harley, shooting her guns, baking and quilting. She has studied at East Tennessee State University, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, and Virginia Highlands and utilizes that education to advocate for special education in the local school system in Johnson County. She is a member of PACE, Parents Advocating Children’s Education. “Megan always gives 110%, she goes above and beyond, and she does it all in the name of helping NECX and it’s staff. She’s a true asset and we are thankful to have her,” Captain Jesse Gregg said of his former CCO, who just recently moved to the Training Department.

## Vashti Holt, Administrative Secretary

Administrative Secretary Vashti Holt got an early start with TDOC. At the age of 16, she had the opportunity to intern in Records at Lois M. DeBerry Special Needs Facility. That experience changed her life.

“That’s when I realized what career path I wanted to be on,” says Holt.

She interned a second time with TDOC before graduating from Antioch High School, this time in the Records Division at Central Office. After attending college in Alabama and spending some time as a stay at home mom, Holt officially joined the TDOC team in 2013 as a Records Clerk at Central Office where she was a part of PC Task Force Training and assisted with Records Clerk Training at the Tennessee Correction Academy. In 2014, her work ethic and knowledge led to her promotion to Administrative Secretary for the Commissioner’s Complex. In that role, she works directly with different divisions within the Department as she answers requests and tracks schedules, calls and correspondence. It’s a challenge she enjoys daily as she looks to the future.

“I love the ongoing support that the staff at TDOC has for each other, and the drive to make Tennessee better for everyone through our work,” she says. “I was here for a year before being promoted, and that’s something I’m proud of, and I will continue to focus on growing and helping to advance both the Department and myself.”



## Correctional Administrator Amanda Jowers

It’s no surprise that Correctional Administrator Amanda Jowers chose a career in criminal justice. She grew up in a law enforcement environment, with her father serving as the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency’s Chicago office. Her mother also worked for the DEA. A former prosecutor, Jowers also served in leadership roles at the Board of Parole before joining TDOC as a Correctional Administrator in 2013. It’s a move she hasn’t regretted.

“We have a great community supervision team. I enjoy working with our staff as well as the other divisions within TDOC,” says Jowers. “Everyone really cares about what they do, and I enjoy working with people who are invested in what they do. We are focused not only on the offenders but the community, and making everyone safer.”

As she crisscrosses the state helping to analyze and align TDOC’s Community Supervision practices with her fellow CAs, Jowers says she’s always looking for ways to move the Department forward, with a focus on efficiency and effectiveness. Her vision for the future of TDOC is a bright one.

“We’re always actively looking for ways to improve our work. We consistently strive to ensure we are using evidence based practices to reduce offender recidivism, which will in turn, enhance public safety,” says Jowers. “One of the best rewards is working with staff members that truly care about their work. TDOC has the hardest working staff in the state, and it is an honor to be on the TDOC team.”



## RMSI Volunteer Richard Goode

Richard Goode has been a volunteer at Riverbend since 1999. Richard came to Riverbend with Harmon Wray and Janet Wolf with the desire to bring continued education to the inmate population. With support of the prison administration and the Vanderbilt Divinity School deans, these educators brought Vanderbilt students and inmates together in a course of religious study that has lasted over a decade.

In 2006 Richard Goode started a contemplative group with inmates in the attempt to learn and practice contemplation and prayer. With the help of his church, Richard has supported Riverbend inmates at Christmas by contributing to our annual Holiday Package Program. Currently, Richard is working with the Department of Correction’s Take-One Program. He is teaming up with Riverbend staff to identify churches, recruit mentors and organize a ministry that will help inmates successfully transition back into the community.

Mr. Goode’s reach can be felt not only at RMSI but at the Tennessee Prison for Women as well. With the support of David Lipscomb University, Richard worked to bring an educational degree program to the Tennessee Prison for Women. Since 2007 nine students from the women’s prison have

earned an Associate in Arts degree. These same women are now working on their Bachelor of Arts degrees. And In 2013, Lipscomb University began offering college courses to inmates at Riverbend as well. For five semesters Riverbend inmates have benefited from their courses and have received college credit.

We salute Richard Goode for his many years of work in the community, especially for those who are imprisoned.





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